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March 04, 2009

DEWHURST MAKES THE CASE AGAINST VOTER ID

That wasn't his intent, of course, but it's clear to see in his **plea for a "compromise"** on the measure that the more people like Lt. Gov. Dewhurst argue for voter ID legislation, the more obvious it is that they're pursuing a partisan fix to a non-existent problem.

"I still can't believe we're not really close on this," Dewhurst told reporters after the Senate adjourned for the day, just a few minutes ago. "Democrats are concerned about elderly voters with no ID ... and I've wanted a grace period of 2-4 years. We've also considered having the state paying for the ID."

Right off the bat, he's admitting that previous efforts by Republicans such as himself to cram this legislation through would have had the effect of disenfranchising some voters, including elderly people such as **Royal Masset's mother**, and by implication poorer people. Perhaps if the Republicans had shown any kind of concern for these points earlier on, there might have been room for some kind of compromise, one that made a real effort to address the lack of photo ID among some segments of the voting population. At this juncture, especially after all the crap he tried in the last session and the voter ID bill exception that was carved out of the rules on Day One of this session, I can't imagine any Democrat taking him at his word on anything related to this topic.

Asked why the Voter ID law is needed, Dewhurst cited allegations that surfaced last year during the presidential campaign in Ohio, of advocacy groups that registered to vote a number of fakers: "Mickey Mouse, the Dallas Cowboys starting team" among others.

"In Harris County, we had 4-5,000 people registered to vote who, when they were called for jury duty, they sent their (voter) cards back. That could have been a felony," he said.

First, note the artful dodge of the question. As has been the case consistently since this bogus issue first became the **single most important issue facing Texas today**, nobody who favors voter ID legislation can point to a single case of voter impersonation at the polls, which is what this law is allegedly supposed to prevent. There's certainly various types of vote fraud that occur, mostly having to do with mail-in ballots and yes, voter registration, but in neither case would voter ID legislation have any effect. The solution, such as it is, has never fit the problem.

As for the "Mickey Mouse" voter registration case Dewhurst cites, the thing to remember is that none of those obviously phony registrations turned into actual voter registration cards that were then used by actual people. No fraudulent votes were cast. There's been a relentless focus on this issue over the past few years by the state and national GOP, and the number of prosecutable cases that they've turned up, even by the most partisan Attorneys General and the Bush Justice Department, have been vanishingly few. They don't have the goods, so they point to something vaguely similar and hope it confuses people.

On the matter of voter registration, I'll refer you to **these two posts** by Matt Yglesias last fall. We deliberately make it hard to register to vote, and easy for people who want to vote and are perfectly eligible to vote to be

denied that opportunity, as happened to **many Harris County residents** last year. If Dewhurst and the Republicans are really serious about finding a compromise, I say that **Greg's idea** about same-day voter registration, right up to and including Election Day, would be the starting point for such negotiations.

But I don't expect them to try. This is just a little good-cop stuff, done in the hope that we'll forget everything that came before now, including in this session. Dewhurst didn't force the two-thirds rule change to build consensus, he did it to clear a path. I expect him and his partymates to take it. The only question is what the Dems have in store to try to trip them up.

Posted by Charles Kuffner on March 04, 2009 to **That's our Lege**

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